

Pearl Jam, Rodman put crowd into orbit

By Mike McLaughlin
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AUGUSTA — Pearl Jam was determined to give a performance of astronomical proportions at the Augusta Civic Center on Thursday night and with a little help from sports superstar Dennis Rodman, the rock band did just that.

"If we were outdoors, we'd be

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able to see it," lead singer Eddie Vedder said of Thursday's lunar eclipse.

"But we're indoors and I still think we're going to be able to feel it," Vedder added. "I just want to rip the roof off this place."

As the countdown to the concert drew to an end, the anticipation

level grew among the lucky ticket-holders at the sold-out event. Tickets for the Maine performance sold out in just seven minutes.

"It's going to be an amazing show, a once-in-a-lifetime show," said 17-year-old Jon Edwards of Augusta.

"I'm waiting for a killer concert," added Jen Jones, 17, of Braintree, Mass.

America's top-selling rock band soon appeared on the Augusta stage and launched into a set of adrenaline-pumping tunes from its four albums.

Pearl Jam opened with the number "Sometimes" and the group quickly drove the crowd wild when it ripped into the hit "Animal" early on in the more than two-hour show.

The five-piece band's thunderous

drumbeats and driving electric-guitar riffs were what created much of the frenzy among the Pearl Jam fans. Vedder's talent at the microphone was also awe-inspiring as his powerful voice echoed through the civic center.

Vedder does not parade around the stage like some entertainers in the rock music field, but instead puts all of his efforts into his vocal delivery. On songs such as "Jeremy" and "Alive" it was obvious that the singer was not holding anything back.

Although Vedder certainly didn't need any help doing his job on stage, he got a boost from Chicago Bulls standout Dennis Rodman. To the surprise of the Augusta audience, Rodman suddenly walked on stage after Jam performed "Alive." Professional basketball's

bad boy boosted Vedder up on his shoulders and walked around the stage.

Rodman and his yellow hair seemed to fit right in with the rowdy audience. The crowd gave the athlete a roar of applause before he exited the stage.

After performing nearly 20 songs, Pearl Jam left the Augusta stage, but the group quickly came back to play a few encore numbers.

"All right, we'll stick around," Vedder said.

The encore numbers included the smash hits "Even Flow" and "Daughter."

Pearl Jam fans certainly were not disappointed with Thursday night's show.

"Except for birth, that was the most incredible experience of my life," one concert-goer said.